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ABSTRACT

This illustrated booklet, designed for parents of preschool children, suggests informal learning activities which have the potential to enhance the social, emotional, cognitive, motor, and language development of preschool children. Three categories of games and activities are presented: (1) language games, (2) mathematical concept games, and (3) creative activities. In each category, from 7 to 12 play experiences are suggested and explained in detail. A chart presenting information on preschool social, emotional, cognitive, and motor development is provided, along with hints for parents on interacting with children. A final section discusses preschool preparation for elementary school. (BRT)

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The Role of Parents As Teachers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Preface

This booklet is about the physical, social and emotional development of preschool children. It has been designed specifically for the use of parents who, we believe, are the earliest and most influential teachers of their children.

The Recruitment Leadership and Training Institute (LTI) hopes that this booklet will provide informal learning activities which, when combined with understanding and love, will help to lay the foundation for the future success and happiness of children.

It is a revision of *Parent Power: Primary Activities for the Home,* written by Dr. Joan C. Carson, of the University of Mississippi.

The Recruitment LTI wishes to acknowledge the research and the writing by Ms. Jessica Agre and Ms. Karen Zaur which constitute a major contribution to this booklet and to thank Mr. Harvey Finkle for the photographs.

Special appreciation is extended to Ms. Grace Watson, Coordinator of New Careers in Education Programs, U.S. Office of Education, for her assistance and support.

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Introduction

As a parent you are your children's first teacher. This booklet is written to help you understand some of the ways children learn and to introduce you to some techniques you can adopt to help learning take place.

Children learn best when they have opportunities to play creatively, imitate adults, repeat activities and talk about their experiences.

Play is children's natural way of learning. They learn about the world as they explore and experiment while playing.

Imitating adults in a variety of settings is another way children learn about their world. Playing "dressup" and "helping" grownups around the house are important learning times for children.

Repetition helps children learn new things. It's natural for them to do activities over and over until they have completely mastered them.

Talking to your children about everyday things is the single most important way you can help your child learn. By explaining and describing things around you and by asking your children questions that encourage them to talk, you can help develop your child's language abilities.

As your children's first teacher you can provide a variety of play experiences, many chances to imitate others, opportunities to repeat activities, and lots of conversation. In an atmosphere where children feel free to explore and ask questions, they will develop self-confidence as they learn many new skills.

How to Use This Booklet

We would suggest that you begin by reading the sections "Your Children Grow in Many Ways" and "Your Children Go to School."

Before beginning any of the activities, read the introductions to the sections on language, mathematics and creative activities. Thumb through the activities in each section to see which ones look interesting to you. You will notice that the activities in the beginning of each section are the easiest. You may want to start with the first one and work through each activity. However, you do not have to do them in any set order.

When you have selected an activity to participate in with your children, read all the directions through before you begin. Check to be sure that you have the necessary materials and time to complete the activity. Tell your children what you will be doing together and then get to work.

When you have finished using this booklet, pass it on to relatives, friends or neighbors who may want to use it with their children.

Language Is Important for Children

The activities in this section will help your children learn to read someday. Your children are too young to read now. Neither teach nor force them to read. Reading turns off too many youngsters because they have been asked to do things which are just too hard for them. This makes them feel unsuccessful and afraid to try. Instead, *turn your children on* by giving them lots of praise, by reading stories together and by talking to them about everyday things.

Words help children get along better in the world. With words children can tell someone else what they want, why they're unhappy, where it hurts, when they're afraid, what they need, what they don't know and what makes them happy.

Words also help children to understand when someone else – such as you – tells them something. As children put new words together, they understand more and more new ideas. A child who can use words well will have an easier time learning to read and write when the time comes to learn those difficult skills.

How Children Learn to Use Language

Talking about everyday things is the single most important way you can help your children's language develop. Children learn hundreds of new words when they work along with adults in doing everyday tasks such as cooking, housework, trips, errands and simple games.

Another way you can help your children use words is to give them a chance to act out and play "pretend games." A few old clothes for "dressing up" will encourage this. If you can find time to look at books and magazines, to watch TV, to listen to the radio or the record player, and to sing songs *with your children,* you will be adding to their experiences with words.

Some Hints for Working with Your Children

You are your children's first and most important teacher. Try your best to smile and look at your children when they are speaking. It encourages them to talk.

Talk and explain things to them as you do your everyday tasks (shopping, cooking, dishes, etc.). This is an easy way to improve their vocabulary and knowledge.

Don't expect your children to act, talk or do things in the same way that an adult does. After all, they *are* children.

Learning should be fun for both you and your children and probably will be if you work together when you have enough time to feel relaxed.

Try to set aside a special time to work with your children. At least once or twice a week would be nice.

Keep the activity time short. Young children have brief attention spans.

Invite another child to do some of the activities with your children.

Let your children help with any cleaning that is needed.

Above all – have fun!

1

What Happened Today?

Talking about "what happened today" is a simple way to give your children practice with words. They learn to use language well when they have a chance to talk about things that really matter to them.

What You Need

About ten minutes – at a time when you feel relaxed. Perhaps after supper, before bedtime or at the dinner table, if that's a quiet time in your day, would be good opportunities.

What You Do

There are many ways to ask, "What happened today?" which will make it easier for your children to talk about the day. Here are some questions you might use:

"What did you do first this morning?"

"What did you do after lunch?"

"Can you tell me something special that happened today?"

"Did anything bad happen that you want to tell me about?"

"Whom did you see today?"

Suggestions

Give your children a chance to share bad things as well as good ones.

Do you have something to tell your children that happened to *you* today?

Smile and nod once in a while to let your children know you're listening.

You can help your children talk about the feelings they had during the day by remarking: "That must have made you feel very grouchy," or "I bet you felt good when that happened."

2

Recipe for Book Lovers

Mix together one children's book, one young child, one reader, and one comfortable seat. It takes only a few minutes. Repeat often for best results.

What You Need

A children's storybook with attractive pictures.

What You Do

Find a comfortable place to sit with your children, or hold the youngsters in your lap. Feeling cozy makes stories even better.

Read the story.

That's all there is to it!

Suggestions

Ask a few questions as you go along:

"What do you think will happen next?"

"What do you see in this picture?"

Stop to explain words you think your children might not know. When the story's over, it's nice to talk about how the people in the book were feeling. Go back and find the part you or your children like best. Remember, too many questions and too much talk can spoil the story. Let the children spend time just looking at the pictures in books. Good children's books are available from many sources. You can borrow books from the public library, from many child-care centers, Head Start centers, churches, schools, etc. There are many paperback children's books for sale at low prices. Buy one or two and read them over and over and over. Children like hearing their favorite stories again and again.

Related Activities

A Trip to the Library

Take your children to the library. Go with some friends and their children, too. Perhaps you all can get books. Librarians know a good deal about children's books and may be able to help you choose some that you and your child will enjoy. You can also find out whether your library has a story hour for young children.

More Reading

Other things to read to your youngsters:

Greeting cards

Letters from friends and family

Newspaper comics

8

3 Color Talk

Here are some easy ways to help your children learn the names of colors.

What You Need

A few minutes when your children are getting dressed.

What You Do

Name the color of the pieces of clothing your children are putting on. "You look pretty in that *red* shirt." If one of your children is wearing something else the same color, point out that they match. "Your socks are *red*, too."

Find the same color in some other places: something you're wearing, something in the room or another piece of clothing. "See, your sister has on a red skirt" or "I see a red design on the milk carton."

Suggestions

Start with colors that are bright such as red, yellow, green and blue. It's hard for young children to learn color names, so you'll have to repeat such "color" talks with your child many times.

Related Activities

Color Shopping
When you go shopping with your children, talk about the colors of the fruits, cans, shoes, clothes and other things as you handle them. "Let's get some of these *green* beans today." "Do you like the *red* sweater or the *blue* one?"

More Color Talk
There are many times each day when you can practice color names with your children. Here are a few: When you ask your youngsters to get something for you, name its color: your *purple* slippers, your *brown* sweater, the *green* glass, etc. When you give your children crayons, name them by color as you put them on the table.

After your children have drawn a picture, point to a color in it: "What a nice *orange* color you used here. Do you see that color some place else?"

4

Setting the Table

Setting the table is one everyday way to help your children learn words that name places.

What You Need

A little extra time and patience around mealtime.

What You Do

Put the plates on the table. Then, ask your children to help you by setting:

a knife *next to* each plate,

a fork *on the other side of* each plate,

a napkin *under* each fork,

a glass *above* each plate.

Suggestions

If your children don't know what you mean, you can set the table together if there's time. Saying the names of the places as you put things on the table will help your children become familiar with these words.

Children learn a lot by imitating adults, and they love to help in their own ways.

Related Activities

After Dinner
After dinner your youngsters can get some additional practice with these "place" words and help you at the same time by putting:

the clean knife *in* the drawer,

the pots *next to* the sink,

the soap *under* the sink.

10

A Chair Game

It's easy to make almost anything into a game for children. For example, you might say: "Let's play a game. Can you get *in back* of the chair? Good. Now can you get *under* the chair?" Continue by asking the children to get:

beside the chair,

in front of the chair,

on the chair.

You might have to help your children find some of these places.

Where's the Button?

For another easy "place" game, all you need is a button. Tell your children to put the button:

on top of the TV,

under the table,

behind the chair.

You can make up more directions as you go along.

Another time you might play this game with a penny, a spoon, a bottle cap or a pencil. Repeating games over and over helps children learn. Remember that praising your children makes them feel good about themselves.

5 Scrambled Egg

Talk-talk-talk about what's happening to an egg while you're cooking it. It's one way to teach your child about how things change.

What You Need

Scrambled eggs on the menu!

What You Do

Show your children an unbroken egg and ask what it's called. Break the egg into a dish and help them to name the two parts: yellow (or yolk) and white.

Let them beat the egg and talk about how it has changed from two parts into just one mixture. Fry the egg, talking to your children about stirring, cooking and scrambling as you do. Questions such as these will help your children think about "what's happening":

"How does it look now?"

"Is it still runny?"

"Is it still yellow?"

Let your children eat the scrambled egg.

Suggestions

One of the best ways to teach children new words is to talk to them as you do things around the house. From this activity, your child might learn *scrambled, stir* and *yolk*.

Related Activities

More about Eggs

There are lots of ways to cook eggs. You and your children can talk about how eggs change when you cook them in any of these ways:

hard-boiled eggs

deviled eggs

soft-boiled eggs

poached eggs

sunny side up

once over lightly

egg salad

beaten egg whites

More Cooking Changes

Jello is an easy food to cook with your children. It goes through these stages when you make it:

powder

liquid

set Jello

As you and your children make Jello, talk about the changes that take place. It's fun to taste the Jello at each stage.

More Talk about Changes: Baby Pictures

Use your children's baby pictures to show them how they've changed. Children love to hear stories about themselves when they were little.

6 Simon Says

Here's a game which will teach children to follow directions, develop listening skills and learn parts of the body.

What You Need

Three minutes and a floor!

What You Do

Tell your children to do the things that "Simon Says," but not to do them when the "Simon Says" is left out.

Direct your children by such instructions as:

"Simon says touch your toes."

"Simon says touch your head."

"Simon says touch your knees."

"Simon says wiggle all over."

Sometimes leave out the "Simon Says" and just say, for example, "Stick out your tongue."

When your children do something that Simon didn't say to do, you might say, "I fooled you that time, let's try again."

When your children aren't fooled, praise them a little. Perhaps say, "I thought I could trick you, but I couldn't."

Suggestions

It's nice to play this game with several children. Usually a child who does something when the leader has not said "Simon Says," is out of the game. But it's really more fun if the children can continue to play and the leader just says, "I tricked you that time."

Related Activities

Opposite School

This is a harder game for children. Tell the children to do exactly the opposite of what you say. For example, you say, "Put your hands *down*." The children should put their hands *up* – otherwise you've "tricked" them.

Do What I Say

This game is harder, but lots of fun. Tell your children to listen *very carefully* and to do what you say but *not always* what you do. Here's what you do:

Say, "Touch your eye" as you touch your own eye.

Say, "Touch your chin" as you touch your own chin.

Say, "Touch your ankle (or elbow or knee)" as you touch your own ankle (or elbow or knee).

Each time wait for the children to do what you said to do.
Every once in a while make up a tricky direction by touching a different part of the body from the one you name. For example:

Say, "Touch your knee" but touch your *nose* instead.

Say, "Touch your mouth" but you touch your *ear* instead.

Most children will touch the part you touch, even if it's different from the one you named. To help your children listen, you might repeat the "tricky" ones again and remind them to listen very carefully to what your voice is telling them to do.

7 Grocery Guessing Game

While you unpack groceries, you can introduce your children to printed words.

What You Need

A few minutes when you and your youngsters are unpacking groceries after a trip to the supermarket.

What You Do	Play this guessing game. When you take something out of the bags which your children might recognize from a TV commercial (such as a design on the package or a picture on a can of corn), ask, "What do you think is in here?" Ask this when you think your children will know the answer. Then you'll be able to say: "That's the right answer. You certainly are smart! See C–O–R–N." Do this with a few things each time you unpack. After a while, your children will know that the label "says" something.
Suggestions	This is not a game to teach children to read. It's a way to teach children about words by showing them common places where groups of letters "say" something. Children enjoy these learning games and learn more from them when they feel successful. Lots of praise from you will help them feel good.
Related Activities	*A Trip to the Supermarket* If you take your children with you when you go grocery shopping, you can play this same game as you put items which you think your children will recognize into the grocery cart.

8

Let's Go!

Talk to your children when they go on neighborhood errands with you. It's a nice way to teach them many new words and ideas.

To the Laundromat

There are many things your children can learn at the laundromat:

Sorting – Have your children help you put all the white clothes in one machine and the colored clothes in another.

Measuring – Let your son or daughter measure the amount of detergent and bleach you will need for the wash and put it in.

Money – You can show your youngsters that the washing machine takes change. Encourage your son or daughter to put the money in. The dryer needs money, too, and the change machine is wonderful for learning about money.

Put in a quarter and you get two dimes and a nickel. Put in two nickels and you get one dime.

Suggestions

Talking about the names of things and what they are used for is an easy way to help your child's language grow.

To the Post Office

Here are some things your children can learn when they go to the Post Office with you.

Weighing – A small scale is used to see how heavy letters are.

Postage – A stamp on a letter costs ten cents or one dime and shows the post office you've paid to have your letter delivered.

Address – Show your children the name of the person it's going to and point out the numbers in the address.

Letter Carrier – Your children can see where the mail comes from and who brings it to your hours.

Suggestions

Your children will love putting the letters in the mail box. Send letters or cards to your children, and print their names and addresses so you can point them out when the letters come. They'll love getting their own mail.

To the Doctor
Your children can learn a good deal while on a visit to the doctor.

Measuring – The scale measures how much they weigh. There are also measures to see how tall they are.

Stethoscope – This helps the doctor hear their hearts beat.

Otoscope – This instrument has a little light in the tube to help the doctor see inside their ears and noses.

Often you have to wait to see the doctor, so it's a good idea to take along something your children can play with quietly (such as crayons and coloring books) and a magazine for yourself.

If your children are going to get a needle, it's better not to say, "It's not going to hurt." You can help by saying something like, "It's going to hurt a little, but I'll hold you." This helps your children to learn to trust you."

For a Walk
Every walk can be a learning experience if you talk about the things you see.

People – Our neighbors and friends.

Letter Carrier – Brings the mail to our house.

Grocer – Sells us bread and canned foods.

Crossing Guard – Helps children get to school and home safely.

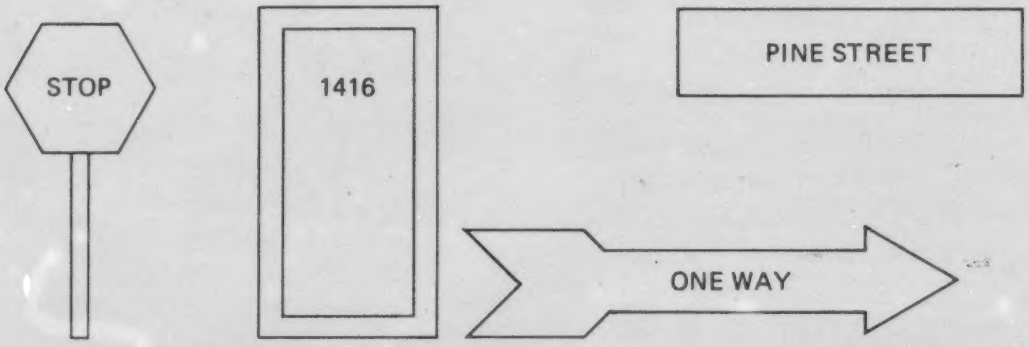
Trash Collectors – Help keep the neighborhood clean by taking away garbage and trash.

Police Officer – Is called to help when there is some kind of trouble.

Animals – Animals, insects and birds that are friendly and not dangerous.

cats		birds
dogs		squirrels
worms	beetles	ants

Signs – The name of the street you live on. Numbers on the houses– especially yours.



Signs of the Seasons – buds, birds, flowers in the spring, leaves turning color in the fall, big green leaves in the summer, Christmas decorations and no leaves on the trees in the winter.

Suggestions

You can talk about the things you see in a casual way. You probably won't want to point out everything.

SALE
URBAN DEVELOPERS
EV. 6-1554

9

What's Next?

Have fun putting stories together. Think about what comes next.

What You Need

Pictures on page 25.
Scissors.

What You Do

Cut one of the strips of pictures into three separate cards. Talk about the pictures one at a time. You can ask such questions as:

"What do you see in this picture?"

"What do you think is going on?"

Then ask questions like these to help your children put the pictures in order so they tell a story:

"What do you think happened first?"

"What do you think happened next?"

"What do you think happened last?"

Line the pictures up in order as you're talking about them. They'll look like a comic strip.

When you're done, help your youngster to tell the whole story in order.

Suggestions

Can you move the pictures around to tell a different story? There's more than one story for each set of pictures.

Related Activities

Writing the Story
Paste or tape the pictures in order on a large sheet of paper. Write down some or all of the story your child has made up.

Children like to see their words in print and love to hear them read.

Try It Again
Another time, use the strip of pictures on Page 25 to make another story.

10 How Do You Feel?

Pictures can help your children talk about their feelings.

What You Need

The picture on Page 28.

What You Do

Show your children the picture and ask such questions as:

"What do you think happened?"

"How do you think the child feels?"

"What do you think is going to happen next?"

"How would you feel if that happened to you?"

"What do you think the child is saying?"

"What would you do?"

"What do you think your mother would say?"

Suggestions

You might like to write down what your children say and read it aloud when you are finished.

Related Activities

Do It Again

Try this another day with the picture on Page 28.

You can also try this activity with pictures from magazines and newspapers.

34

11

Name Games

Help your children to recognize and to write their own names.

Help your children learn to recognize their names.

What You Need — Small cards and a pencil.

What You Do — Write your children's names on some small cards. Put the cards on their pillows, near their toothbrushes, on their chairs where they will sit to eat. Pin name cards on your children's shirts. Kids love this.

Write your children's names whenever possible where they can see them.

What You Need — A pencil.

What You Do — Write your children's names on pictures brought home from school or made at home. Talk when you're writing. For example, "I'm writing your name P A U L, that says PAUL."

Help your children find places where their names are written.

What You Need — Anything with your children's names on it such as: birthday cards, a note from the day-care center or school, pictures, letters, gifts, etc.

What You Do — Point out your children's names to them. Say the letters and read their names. Then ask them what it says.

Tracing is the first step to name writing.

What You Need — Paper and pencil or crayon.

What You Do — Write your children's names on the paper. Write them as big as this is:

DAWN

Help your children to use their pointing fingers to trace over each letter as you say what it is.

Give your children pencils and let them trace the letters in their names. If they need help, you can guide their hands. Children need to do this many times.

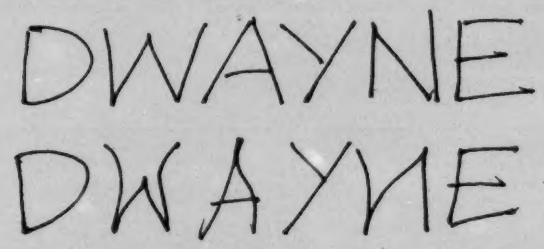
When your children are ready, help them copy their names.

What You Need

Pencil and paper.
Children who can easily trace the letters in their names.

What You Do

Write your children's names on pieces of paper. Write them big. Then, have your children copy each letter beneath it like this:



Suggestions

It takes a lot of practice before children can write their names without a sample to copy.

When children are learning to write their names, they often write the letters backwards, upside down, or out of order. Sometimes they leave out letters or only write a few of them.

Don't force your children to write their names exactly right. This will come with practice. Praise what your children can do by saying "What a nice 'A' you made." You can fill in the letters your children can't write yet.

12 Making a Book

Making a book is one way to show your children that written words are just printed talk.

What You Need

Several sheets of paper.

Staples or a needle and thread.

What You Do

Hold the sheets of paper together and fold them in half.

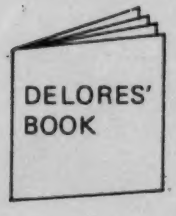
Use staples or sew them together like this:

First make a few holes,
then sew in and out.

Number the pages in the book.

Tell your children that you've made books for them.

Put your children's names on the books. Let them write their names themselves if they can!



OR

Let your children use pencils or crayons to draw pictures or designs on the first page of the book.

Ask your children to tell you about the pictures. Write down the words.

"It's a scribble."

"the little girl"

"my house"

Read the words out loud to them after you've written them. After a few days take out the books again. Make more pictures and stories. After a while your children will have written whole books and will really be pleased.

Suggestions

It isn't necessary to write something about every drawing.

Don't worry if the drawings don't look like what the youngsters say, or don't look like anything at all. This is natural for children who are learning to draw.

If your children say "nothing" when you ask what's in the picture, you might write "N-o-t-h-i-n-g" and say "see, it says 'nothing'." The next time you could encourage children with nothing to say about a picture by asking, "What did you make?" or, "What colors did you use?" and write down their answers.

"It's just a picture."

"red and all over green"

Related Activities

Writing Practice

If your children are interested in writing, show them how to use their fingers or crayons or pencils to trace over what you've written.

If your children can make some of the letters, maybe they'd like to write below your writing.

Another Book

It would be nice to make more books together in a few weeks. Reading your children's books to them helps them learn that words on paper are just printed talk.

III

Introducing Your Children to Mathematics

The activities in this section will help your children begin to use and learn the new language of mathematics. The best way to help your children learn this new language is by using it with them every day. Mathematics is just another language we use to describe the world around us. We use it to compare and group things together in many ways – by shape, size, weight, number, amount, likenesses and differences or by order.

Mathematics has many special words and special tools.

Special Words	*Special Tools*
shape	scales
size	thermometers
amount	calendars
number	rulers
likeness	yardsticks
difference	measuring spoons
time	measuring cups
weight	clocks
width	timers
length	watches
height	money
compare	cash registers
	calculators

Around the house and in your neighborhood you can look for these special words and tools, and point them out to your children. You'll find different kinds of scales in the bathroom, at the supermarket, at the doctors and at the post office. You can find numbers on clocks, houses, money and packages. Children will see you using money and begin to recognize pennies, nickles and dimes. When your children help you cook, they begin to understand measuring with spoons and cups. Shapes are all around you, and you can point them out. Whenever possible use words that compare such things as:

little – lot
small – big
short – long
little – large
light – heavy
little bit – lot
sweet – sour
smooth – scratchy
fat – skinny

Using these words and others like them will make it easier for your children when they go to school.

More Hints for Working with Your Children
Praise your children. It's one of the best ways to encourage them and make them feel good about themselves.

Young children need to have activities repeated many times before they learn, so don't be discouraged if your children have forgotten what you did last time.

Since children are more interested in working with real things than with pictures, use real spoons, crayons or buttons.

If an activity seems too hard for your children, *stop*. You don't want your children to get discouraged.

Your children will enjoy and learn from activities they can do fairly easily.

Answer your children's questions when you can. If you don't know the answer, tell them so and try to find an answer.

Have fun as you engage in these activities with your children.

1

What's the Same? What's Different?

Sorting things by color, shape, size or use helps children learn the ways things are alike and different.

What You Need

A group of eight different red items. You might include:

a sweater	an apple
a blouse	a mitten
a crayon	a piece of thread
a button	a piece of yarn
a book	a piece of paper
a sock	a scarf

Another four or five items which are *not* red.

What You Do

Sit with your children at the table on which you've put all the red items and all the items which are not red.

Help your children name each of the items. Hold up the items one at a time and ask your children if these are red or not red.

Help them put the red items in one pile and the ones that aren't red in another.

When you have sorted all the items, mix them together again and ask your children if they can make the two piles by themselves.

Suggestions

Another time have your youngsters sort things by another color, such as blue or not blue, or yellow and not yellow. It really helps if you praise your children when they have done a good job or tried hard.

Related Activities

Collecting Things You Wear

Ask your children to bring you some things that people wear. You may need to help them make the collection. Some things they might find are:

pants	underwear	boots
belt	socks	mittens
shoes	sweaters	hats
earrings	skirts	

When you have the collection of clothes, ask them how all these things are alike. Help them see that these are all alike because people wear them.

Other Collections

Other collections you can make are things you eat:

fruit	cake
cereal	canned vegetables
potato chips	peanut butter
bread	jelly

things you eat with:

forks	cups
spoons	glasses

things you read:

books	newspapers
magazines	phone books

2
Matching Games

Matching one thing to one other thing, such as one fork for each plate, helps children learn to count and to begin to understand numbers.

What You Need

A few extra minutes when you are setting the table.

What You Do

Put a plate on the table for each person who's going to eat. Ask your children to put a fork on the table for each plate.

You could then ask your children to put a glass or a spoon on the table for each plate.

Then you might ask your children whether there's a chair at the table for each plate.

Suggestions

You might have to help your children the first few times by saying, "Here's one fork for this plate and now we need another fork for this plate." Continue until each plate has a fork. Since the most important part of this activity is matching, don't worry about where your child places the forks, glasses, spoons, etc.

Related Activities

More One-to-One Matching

Here are some other times when your children could match one thing to one other thing. They can:

give one cookie to each person at the table.

give one crayon to each of their friends.

give one cup of juice to each brother and sister.

put one cup on each saucer.

Every time your children do these things, they are learning about one-to-one matching.

3
Patterns

Following patterns help children learn to solve problems and to think ahead.

What You Need

two forks
two crayons
two socks
two spoons

What You Do

Put one fork, one crayon, one sock and one spoon in a row on a table. Talk about what you're doing as you go along by saying, "First I'm putting out a fork, and then a crayon, and now a sock, and then a spoon."

Give your children the other forks, crayons, socks, and spoons and ask them to put them in the same order directly under yours.

If this is too hard, help your children by pointing and saying something like: "Look, the fork comes first," and waiting until your children select the fork and put it down. You can help with the other things in the same way.

Suggestions

Another time you can put the same four objects in another order and repeat this activity.

Related Activities

Patterns from Pictures

What You Need

The picture on Page 41

A real pencil, a sock, a fork and a button.

What You Do

Ask your children to name the things (a pencil, a sock, a fork and a button). When they can do that, give your children a real pencil, a sock, a fork, and a button, and see whether they can put them down in the same order as the items are in the picture.

More Patterns From Pictures

What You Need

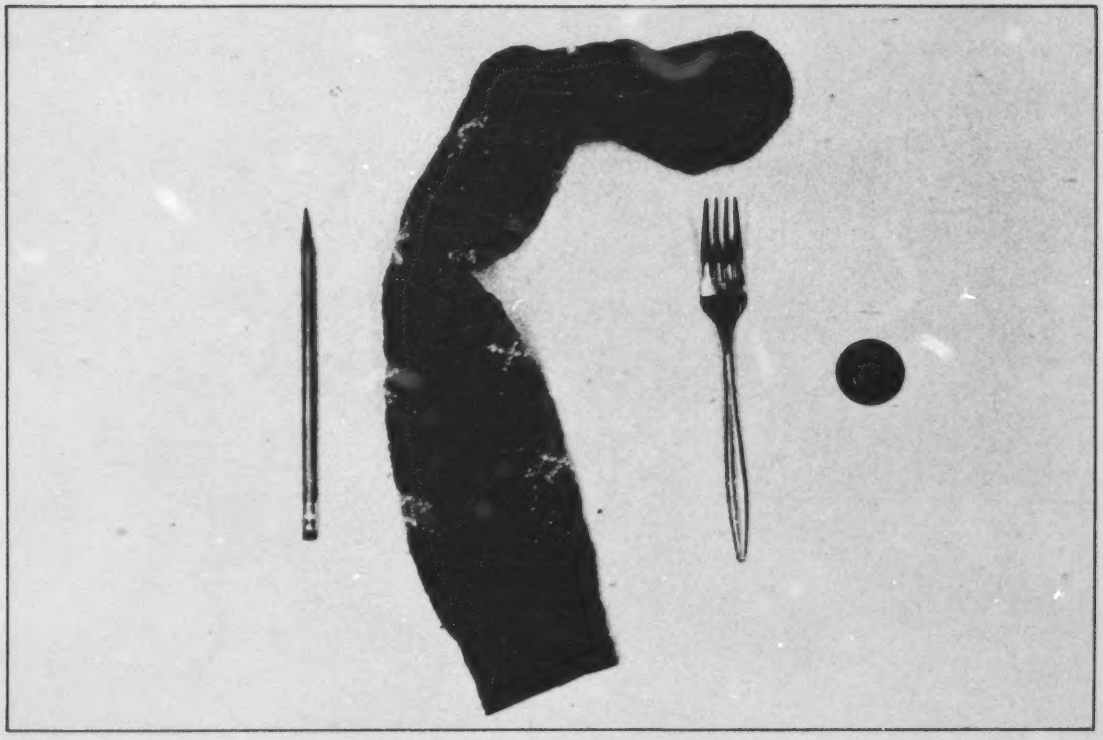
The picture on Page 42.

A real toothbrush, a book, an envelope, a spoon, a comb, a glass and a pair of scissors.

What You Do

After your children name the items, give them the real things and see whether they can put them out in the same order as the picture shows.

The fact that the pictures may not look exactly like the real things makes these related activities harder.



Suggestions

If any of these activities are too hard for your children, then *stop*. If they can't do them, just cease asking and try again in about six months. Your children will enjoy these tasks if they can do them and feel successful.

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4 Size Hunt

Help your children learn what bigger and smaller mean.

Find Something Bigger

What You Need

A pencil.

What You Do

Ask your children to find some things which are bigger than a pencil. As your children walk around the room, they might find some of these things:

a telephone book	a table
a television set	a chair
a newspaper	a window
a plate	a door
you	them

Encourage them to hold the pencil up to each thing they find to show that it really is bigger.

Find Something Smaller

What You Need

The same pencil.

What You Do

This time ask your children to hunt for things in the room that are smaller than the pencil.

This time they might find:

a button
one of their fingers
another pencil
a bottle cap
a key
a ring
a penny

Remember to ask them to hold the pencil up to each thing they find to show that it really is smaller.

Who's Bigger?

What You Need

Something smaller and something larger than your children.

What You Do

Stand next to your children and ask, "Who's bigger?" "Who's smaller?" Help your children see that they are little and you are big.

Stand by a door. Ask your children which is bigger now, you or the door. Of course the door is bigger and now you're smaller.

Have your children stand next to something that is smaller than they are as, for instance, a toy car. Ask, "What's bigger, now?"

Now, find some other things which show that your children are big *and* small.

Suggestions

Teach your children several ways to say big and small by using a variety of size words when you talk:

"Please bring me a *little* glass of water."

"These pants are too *long* for you."

"Look at the *teeny-tiny* ant on the ground."

"Which is *larger*, the spoon or the plate?"

5 Number Names

Try these number games to help your children learn to count.

What You Need

A "counting out rhyme."

Here are three examples:

One, two buckle your shoe
Three, four shut the door
Five, six pick up sticks
Seven, eight lay them straight
Nine, ten a big fat hen.

One, two, three, four, five I saw a hen alive
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten then I saw another hen.

One potato, two potato
Three potato, four
Five potato, six potato
Seven potato more.

What You Do

Choose one of the above rhymes (or another one you know) and read it to your children several times. After a while, you'll both know it by heart and can have fun using it to practice number names any time you want.

Related Activities

You can make almost anything you do a chance for counting aloud with your children. Here are a few examples:

When you come home from the store and are putting groceries away, count the number of packages, cans and boxes out loud with your children.

Count the number of people eating at the table.

Count aloud the number of cookies you give your children at snack time.

Count your children's fingers and toes at bath time or bed time.

Count the number of doors or windows in your apartment.

Count out the number of forks, knives and spoons you use when setting the table.

Count to ten very slowly before saying good night.

Count to ten before getting angry!

Suggestions

There are several steps children go through when they learn to count. At first you will need to say the numbers many, many times yourself while your children just listen. You might want to stop at five. After a while, encourage your children to say the numbers with you.

When you help your little girls or boys to say the numbers themselves, they may only be able to count to two or three, but that's a good start.

Children usually mix up the order of the numbers or leave some out when they are learning to count. This is perfectly normal. If your child says one, two, three, six, one, two or one, five, two, eight just go back to saying rhymes and counting everyday things with them.

6 Numeral Hunt

Finding numerals in your house and neighborhood is a good way to help your child learn to recognize the numerals from one to five.

What You Need

Any of these places where numerals appear:

- your house address
- your apartment number
- a page in a book of magazine
- the price on a package in the store
- a size label in a piece of clothing
- a clock or watch
- the telephone dial

What You Do

Point out the numerals you see in one of these places. Let your children touch the numeral and trace over it with their fingers. Say the number out loud. "See here's a two on the door."

Encourage your youngsters to repeat the numerals after you say them. Sometimes children will do this automatically, or you might ask, "Now, can you say two?"

Suggestions

Remember that the more you praise your children, the more they will learn from experiences like these.

7
Find Another

Play a simple hiding game that helps children count and learn what one more means.

What You Need

Five pennies, five buttons, five bottle caps or five spoo.

What You Do

Hide the five things around the room in different places, where they won't be too hard for your children to find.

Ask your children to look around the room for one of the pennies and bring it to you. When your children find the penny and bring it over, you might say, "I have one penny, can you find another?"

When they bring the second penny over, you can say, "Now, I have two pennies, can you find another one?"

Repeat this until all the pennies are found. Remember to show your children the pennies you have in your hand as you say the amount each time. After the pennies are all found, count them aloud with your child.

Related Activities

Another Counting Game
When your youngsters begin to understand counting, you can play this game with raisins or cereal pieces.

What You Need

A small cup filled with cereal pieces or raisins.

What You Do

Fill a small cup with cereal pieces. Ask your children to give you three pieces of cereal or raisins. When they do, count them out together. It always helps to say, "Good counting!"

If they make mistakes, you can help them count out three another way by holding up three fingers. Then say, "Here's what three looks like." Count to three slowly as you point to your three fingers, "1-2-3."

Let your children eat the pieces of cereal they've counted out.

Repeat this several times using other numbers.

This is one of those games which you can play often for just a few minutes each time.

IV

Creative Activities in the Home

The activities in this section will help your children begin to explore and learn about the things around them. Children who have opportunities to try many things, who can express themselves in different ways and who have a good feeling about themselves often have a head start in school.

Many activities that children enjoy at home and at school are not directly related to reading, writing and mathematics. These creative experiences are just as important in the development of your child.

Creative activities give children a chance to find new ways to express their ideas and feelings. Through these activities children learn to increase their ability to observe, plan and solve problems.

Creative activities help the development of language by giving children experiences they can talk about with a willing listener. Children find that there are many enjoyable ways to express themselves.

Painting, cutting, molding, pasting and coloring are some art activities that young children enjoy. When children use art materials, they develop small finger muscles and gain confidence in themselves. They also begin to grow responsible as they use and care for art materials.

Through dress-up play children gain information about the world by experimenting with different roles. Children grow socially when they have a chance to explore roles, ideas and feelings with others.

Music can enrich the lives of children in many ways. Songs help develop language skills. Dancing to music helps develop the children's sense of space and rhythm. Music can teach children about their culture.

Children can do many of these things without very much help from adults but materials are needed for the following activities. Some of

these materials you can save, some you can make and a few others you might consider buying.

Basic Ingredients for Creative Activities

You have many things right in your home which you can use to have fun with your children and to help them learn.

Some Are Free		
Patience	Love	Consistency
Understanding	Time	Security
Sympathy	Help	Praise

Some You Can Make	
What to Make	How to Make Them
Paste	Mix one cup of water with one-half cup of flour until smooth. Keep in a covered container in the refrigerator.
Workshirt	Cut sleeves from an old shirt or blouse and have your child put it on backwards. This is a great coverup for painting and other messy activities.
Bags or boxes to keep dress clothes and art materials in	Save a few cartons or heavy shopping bags. Use felt markers and other art materials to decorate them. Write your child's name on the box or bag. Keep them in a special place.

Some You Can Save	
What to Save	How to Use Them
Paper bags	Drawing and painting.
Magazines	Cut and paste. Talk about the pictures.
Empty milk cartons	Use in water play. Make a set of blocks.
Old socks	Puppets.
Old clothes	Dress up.
Scraps of materials and wrapping paper	Cut up and use with paste. To make pretty color pictures.
Old sponges	Cut up for little paint brushes.
Newspaper	Put on table or floor for protection.
Old shirt or blouse	Put on child to protect clothes.
Bottle caps	Sorting. Paste on cardboard. Nail on wood. Simple counting games.

Some You Can Save	
What to Save	How to Use Them
Oatmeal, cornmeal or grits cartons	Making drums.
Coffee cans	Useful containers.
Paper rolls	Paint them.
	Make constructions.
Greeting cards	Cut and paste.

Some You May Want To Buy	
What To Buy	How To Use
Crayons	Basic.
Pencils	
White glue (stronger than paste, good for cardboard constructions)	Materials for all creative activities.
Magic markers	
Scissors	
Tape	
Colored construction paper	
Water colors or tempera paint	

Still More Hints for Working with Your Children

Play is a child's way of finding out about the world.

Don't expect your childrens' art work to look like that of an adult; after all, they *are* children.

Try to provide play clothes that can be washed easily. Many activities for children are messy.

Children enjoy doing activities over and over again.

Learning times should be fun for both you and your children. They probably will be if you have enough time to feel relaxed.

Let your children help with any cleaning up that is needed.

Remember – above all – have some fun!

1 Dressing Up

Dress-up and dramatic play can be fun. Pretending and imitating helps children learn about their world.

What You Need

Old clothes which you've saved, such as:

- old shoes
- jewelry
- pocket books filled with junk
- eyeglass frames
- old shirts
- hats
- vests
- ties and belts
- gloves
- old skirts

What You Do

Have your children select clothes and dress up. You can encourage them to talk about themselves by asking questions like:

"Who are you?"

"What's happening?"

"Where are you going?"

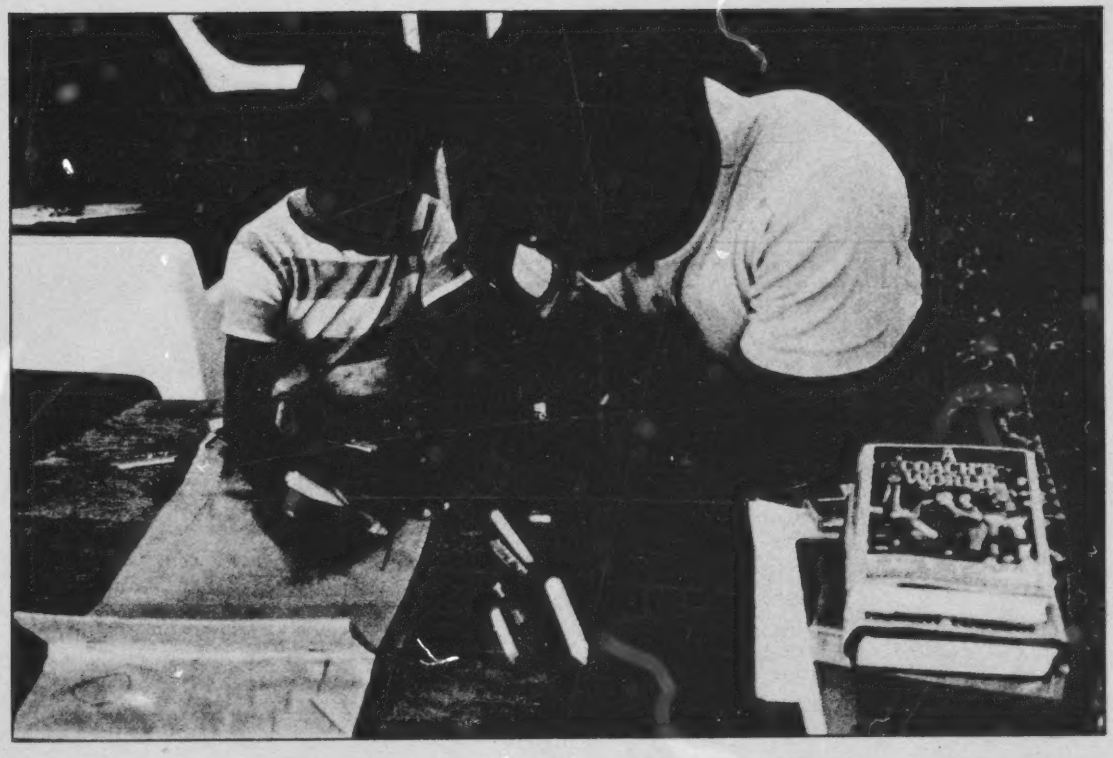
Your children will enjoy dressing up and playing pretend games alone and with friends.

Suggestions

If your children need something for a pretend game that you can't provide, encourage them to imagine they have "it" anyway. For example, they might pour coffee from a make-believe coffee pot into a pretend cup. You might enjoy a pretend cup of coffee, too!

Keep dress-up clothes in a special drawer, box or shopping bag which your children can reach.

Children use and develop language skills in dramatic play. This kind of play also helps children practice working out problems.



2

Paper Bag Masks

Masks are fun for pretending, dress-up and make believe.

What You Need

Large paper bags

Scissors

Crayons, felt markers, paint, fabric or paper

Scraps and paste for decoration

What You Do

Put the bags over your children's heads and gently mark where the eyes are. The bags will fit better if you cut large semicircles from each side of the bags to make room for the shoulders. Take the bags off, cut holes for the eyes and shoulders and help your children decorate the masks using some of the materials listed above.

Now, they are ready to wear for playing make believe.

Suggestions

This is a good FREE Halloween costume for young children.

3

Sock Puppets

Puppets can help your children act out problems or can be fun to play with.

What You Need

Old socks.

Materials for decorating the socks: buttons, fabric, yarn scraps, etc.

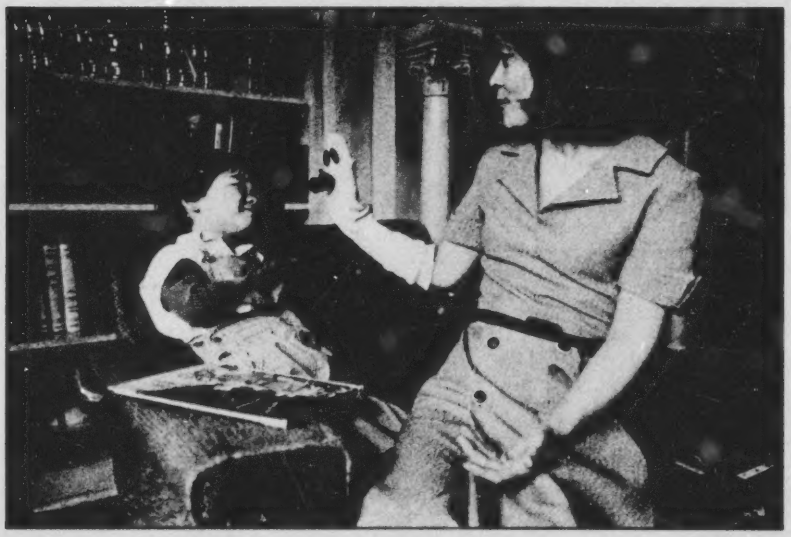
What You Do

Put old socks on each of your hands and each of your children's hands. Now your puppets can "talk" with each other.

You can let your children decorate the socks with buttons, yarn and scraps of material which can be pasted or glued on.

Suggestions

Your children will enjoy playing with these puppets even if the decorated socks don't look like a face.



4 Water Play: Washing

Children love to imitate you at work around the house and they learn by doing.

What You Need

A sink half-filled with water.

Some small items that can be washed such as dolls, doll clothes, spoons, forks, pot lids, etc.

Detergent.

Newspaper on the floor and counter near the sink.

An old shirt or plastic apron.

What You Do

Help your children put on the old shirt or the apron to protect their clothes.

Add a little soap to the water and just let your children play.

Suggestions

Your children and some of the things in your kitchen will probably get wet. The amount of fun that children have playing with water makes this activity worth the mess.

Related Activities

Let your children help you when you wash the dishes. Set out a pan of soapy water near the sink on some newspapers and give them some spoons and forks and other small things to wash for you. Your children will be learning to take responsibility for household jobs and having fun at the same time.

Remember your youngsters learn a lot when they imitate you. If it's easier for you, use a tub or large pan half-filled with water instead of the sink. Remember to put newspaper down first.

5

Water Play: Filling and Pouring

Water can be used to help children measure and compare.

What You Need

A sink half-filled with water.

Different size measuring cups, empty margarine tubs, empty squeeze bottles, milk cartons and other non-glass containers. Spoons for stirring and measuring, a funnel and a baster if you have them.

Newspaper on counter and floor near the sink.

Old shirts or plastic aprons.

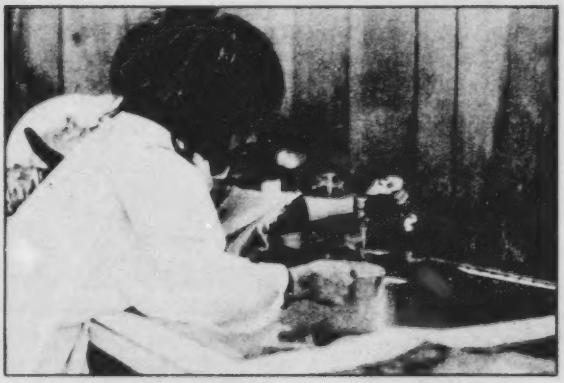
What You Do

Help your children put on old shirts or aprons to protect their clothes.

Let your children play with the water and the containers.

Suggestions

Children have lots of fun playing with water and learn a good deal about volume. As they experiment, they can find out how much water it takes to fill different containers, what too full and not enough mean, and what the relation is between the size of the container and how much it holds.



6

Water Play: Floating and Sinking

Water play can be used to help children learn about the things around them and to improve their vocabulary.

What You Need

A sink half-filled with water.

A chair your children can stand on to reach the sink.

Newspaper on the floor and counter near the sink.

Old shirts or plastic aprons to protect your children's clothing.

A collection of things your children can put in the water, some of which will sink and some of which will float. Here is a sample collection for this activity:

- a plastic comb
- a small plastic toy
- a sock
- a button
- a penny
- a plastic lid from margarine or other containers
- a small bar of soap
- a pencil
- a key
- a straw
- a small piece of paper

What You Do

Put the collection of items next to the sink.

Let your children choose one of the items and put it in the water. Then ask, "What happened to that when you put it in the water?" Your children will probably be able to tell you that it "got wet." That's right, but help your children think about something else that happened by asking whether the item went to the bottom of the

water or stayed on top of it. Help them to tell you the answer themselves. Repeat this with several other of the objects in the collection.

After a while tell your children that when something goes to the bottom, we say it "sinks." But when it stays on top of the water, we say it "floats."

Take all the objects out of the water, and put them on one side of the sink. One at a time ask your children to find out if a thing sinks (goes to the bottom) or floats (stays on top of the water). Perhaps you could help them put all the things that float in one pile and the things that sink in another pile.

Suggestions

This water play activity is much more adult-directed than "filling and pouring" or "washing." Remember that your children's attention span for such activities is very short. They will learn more in the long run from playing several short floating and sinking games with you, than from one long one.

If there's time, add a little soap to the water at the end of the floating and sinking activity and let your children do some washing all by themselves.

Floating and sinking will probably be new words to your children. Don't be surprised if you have to explain the words over and over. Your children will be able to *see* if something stays on top or goes to the bottom. Help them learn the new words in terms of what they can *see*: "When something stays on top of the water, we say it floats; but when it goes to the bottom, we say it sinks."

If it's easier, put a tub or large pan, half-filled with water, on a table instead of using a sink. Don't forget to put newspaper down first.

Related Activities

Practicing New Words

From these floating and sinking activities your children can learn the new words "float" and "sink." If you use these new words at other times, your children will have an easier time making these new ideas part of their everyday vocabulary. Here are a few examples of when you might do this.

"Look, here's a picture of a boat *floating* on the water."

"Oh, I dropped a spoon in the pan and it *sank* to the bottom."

"Let's see whether this soap *floats* or *sinks* in the bathwater."

"Can you reach down and get the baby's cup? I just saw it *sink* to the bottom of the dishpan."

7

Play-Dough

Children love to make their own clay and to roll, stretch and shape it into jewelry, decorations and strange-looking figures.

What You Need

One cup of flour

One-half cup of salt

About one-third cup of water

A newspaper

What You Do

Place the newspaper on the kitchen table. This will make clean-up easier. Mix the salt and flour together in a bowl.

Add the water a little at a time. Squeeze the dough until it is smooth.

If the play-dough gets crumbly, wet your hands with a little water. If the dough gets too wet, sprinkle it with flour and squeeze again.

Store the play-dough in a plastic bag in the refrigerator until you are ready to use it. Let it warm up to room temperature before you use it.

Suggestions

Your children would probably like to make the play-dough themselves with just a little help from an adult. Three- and four-year-olds can do this.

Young children love to experiment with play-dough. It's easy to make and have on hand in the refrigerator for your children to play with.

Here are just a few of the things your children and you can make with play-dough.

Holiday decorations – They are especially nice for Christmas. Make a large hole in the objects before baking. (They close quite a bit during baking.) Place in oven at 225° for 20 minutes. Tie a ribbon or string through the holes and hang the decorations in your window or on your Christmas tree.

Jewelry – Make large holes in the objects before baking. Add some string and your children will have necklaces they made themselves.

Most of the time children won't really make anything out of the play-dough. They will roll, stretch, shape, poke, and pinch it to find out what happens to it. This kind of play is very important for children so don't be surprised if their work doesn't really look like anything.

Related Activities

Coloring Play-Dough

There are two ways to color play-dough:

1. You can add a few drops of food coloring to the water before mixing.

2. You can make something out of play-dough first and color it with felt markers or paints after it has dried.

Drying Play-Dough

Play-dough can be dried in the air, or more quickly in the oven.

Air drying – Place the object outdoors in the sun for a few hours, or let it dry overnight on a table or window sill. This way of drying is good for small objects.

Oven drying – Place the object in a slow, 225° oven with the door closed. Bake small thin objects for about 15 minutes. Back thick objects for about one hour. Check occasionally to make sure they don't burn.

Protecting the Finish

If you want the things your children make to last, brush them with two or three coats of clear nail polish after they are dry. This helps the play-dough to harden and keeps the paint from coming off.

8

Finger Paint

It's really fun to paint with your fingers! Try it!

What You Need

One-half cup liquid laundry starch

Poster paint

An old blouse or shirt for each child

Newspaper

Waterproof table top or counter

What You Do	Put newspaper on the floor near the table and an old shirt on each child to make clean-up easier. Add a few drops of poster paint to the liquid starch and pour some on the table. Let your children make as many designs as they want to with fingertips, fist and whole hand.
Suggestions	Mix a batch of two or three separate colors (red, yellow or blue) and encourage your children to start with one color. Then add one other color and see what happens! This activity can be messy so make sure your children's sleeves are rolled up and the newspaper is on the floor. You might put the old shirt on backwards – it covers better that way.
Related Activities	*Make a Print* After your children have done this several times, you can make a print of their drawings. Just take some paper and put the paper down right over the drawing on the table. Press lightly all over, pick up the paper and – you have a print!

9

Macaroni Jewelry

Stringing jewelry is fun and helps children control their muscles.

What You Need

Any kind of macaroni with a hole large enough to pass a string through. Ziti, rigatoni, ditalini and wagon wheels all work. Look on your grocery shelf for other kinds.

String or yarn.

Tape.

What You Do	Cut a piece of string long enough to make necklaces, bracelets or headbands for your children. Make stringing the macaroni pieces easier for your children by wrapping a piece of tape around one end of the yarn or string to make a "needle." Put one large piece of macaroni onto the "non-needle" end of the string and tie a knot to keep the rest of the pieces from sliding off. Let your children fill up the string with macaroni pieces. When they have finished, tie the ends of the string together to make a bracelet, necklace or headband.
Suggestions	*Don't worry if your children eat some of the noodles.* The noodles won't hurt them. (Many children think they taste good.)
Related Activities	*Colored Macaroni Necklaces* You need all the ingredients for macaroni necklaces plus food coloring. Mix one-half teaspoon of food coloring in one-half cup of water. More food coloring will make a deeper color. Put the macaroni in the colored water for a few seconds. Remove the macaroni and spread it on waxed paper, paper towels or newspaper to dry. Since it takes about six hour to dry, do this the day before you want to make the jewelry.

10

After-Dinner Gardening

Children grow in many ways – and so does the food they eat. Plant a small garden and watch them grow together.

Sweet Potato

What You Need

A fresh sweet potato

A glass jar

Toothpicks

What You Do

Stick three or four toothpicks into a potato about one-third from the narrow end to support the potato in the jar of water. Fill the jar with enough water to cover the bottom of the potato and put the potato into the jar.

Keep the jar in a sunny place. Check each day to make sure the end of the potato is covered with water. First, the roots will grow, and then the leaves. After several months you will have a lovely vine.

Carrot Tops

What You Need

One or two carrot tops about one and one-half inches long

A few small stones or pebbles

A saucer, aluminum pan or TV dinner pan

What You Do

If there are greens, cut them off the carrots. Place the carrot tops in the saucer or pan and put the stones around them to keep them in place.

Put water in the dish to cover the pebbles and check often to make sure there's enough water.

In about two weeks you will have new leafy carrot tops.

You can also do this with beet tops and parsnip tops.

Growing Seeds

What You Need	Seeds from oranges, lemons, grapefruits or pumpkins
	A jar or plastic cups
	Potting soil or dirt
What You Do	Use a pencil point to poke two small holes in the bottom of the cup. Fill the cup with soil and plant seeds about half way down and add water. Water them every few days and watch them grow. It takes about two to three weeks.

Growing Beans

What You Need	Paper towels
	A flat dish or TV tray
	Five or six dried lima beans or other dried beans
What You Do	Soak the beans overnight. The next day put the beans on a soaking wet paper towel. The beans should not be in a puddle of water. Check every day to make sure the towel is moist and watch the beans grow.
	If you plant them in soil when they grow larger, you will have a lovely vine.
Suggestions	Ask your children to guess what they think is going to happen and write down their guesses. Then wait and see what does happen.
	Discuss the changes they see in the gardens each day.

V

Your Children Grow in Many Ways

Young children develop skills in many areas – intellectual, emotional, social and physical. This section offers some final hints which may help you to deal with your children's social and emotional development and outlines typical physical and intellectual development for three-, four-, and five-year-olds.

Since normal children vary a great deal in their development, don't worry if your children do not fit exactly the description at their age levels. However, if you feel that your children are not developing normally in one or more of these areas, consult your clinic or doctor. When problems are found early, treatment is often easier.

Social and emotional development takes place slowly and gradually. Changes in behavior for three-, four- and five-year-olds are happening all the time. There are many ways parents can help their children as they are developing. The most important thing you can do is to talk with your children about things that are happening around them and to them.

In the area of physical and motor development creative activities will help your children exercise the small finger muscles that they will need one day for writing. It's easy to help your children exercise their large muscles. Just give them lots of chances for the kind of active play they love – running, jumping, rolling over and hopping. Skipping and somersaulting are a little harder. But with some help from you, your five-year-old child can probably master those skills, too.

Some Final Hints for Working with Your Children

Situation	*Suggestions*
Your children spill their milk, drop their glasses on the floor or dirty or tear pieces of their clothing.	Of course you're angry, and don't feel badly about letting your son or daughter know that you are. However, it helps to express some of your anger at what happened instead of at your children. For example, you might say, "What an awful mess, let's get a sponge and clean it up right away." That lets your children know you think they've made a mess, but it has also given them a way to help fix it up (by getting the sponge).

Some Final Hints for Working with Your Children (Cont.)

Situation	*Suggestions*
	Another example of this: "I sure wish you hadn't gotten paint on those shirts. You'd better put them in the laundry right away. This weekend, let's make special shirts to wear when you paint."
Same as the first situation; that is, your children have made some sort of a mess.	You're not the only one who's upset. Help your children to express their anger, too. For example, you might say, "I bet you were afraid to tell me you ripped your pants." or "Did you feel as angry as I did when that glass broke?"
Your children do something that pleases you.	Don't forget to tell them. It's easy to forget to tell your children that you are happy about something they've done. But if you can remember to talk about your loving and happy feelings to your children as well as your angry ones, they'll feel loved and secure.
Your children want to watch everything on TV or to buy a certain kind of cereal at the store.	Don't be afraid to say no and to limit TV watching. *Remember, you're the boss!* Your children will respect you if you don't change your mind when you say: "That show is too grown-up (or scary) for you."

Some Final Hints for Working with Your Children (Cont.)

Situation	*Suggestions*
	or "Let's buy some cereal that doesn't have so much sugar in it. It's better for your teeth."
There are no other children at home for your child to play with.	Make plans with another child's parents for their child to come an and play for a few hours. In return let your child visit friends. But *parents,* not children of this age, should make the plans.
You have a large family and the children always play together and help each other.	Even when there are lots of other children at home, it's nice for a child to invite someone over to play *just with him or her* once in a while. It's very nice if you can manage to spend a few minutes alone with each of your children each day. Helping them get ready for bed is one time of the day you might be able to do this. It's hard to do this when there are many people around; but, if you can find the extra few minutes here and there, you'll make each one of your children feel very special.

Some Final Hints for Working with Your Children (Cont.)

Situation	*Suggestions*
There are many people living in your home and there really isn't very much room.	Children (and grown-ups) get a good deal of pleasure from a private place for their own things. Try to help everyone have a box, shopping bag or drawer for special private things. Children can spend many happy hours in play spaces that may surprise you. You might find them under the table, or behind a big chair. Children love to find child-size places to play in.
You go to work and leave your children with other adults or at a center on a regular basis.	You are not neglecting your children when you leave them in the care of someone you trust. They learn a lot from spending time with different people. The quality of time you spend with your youngsters is more important than the quantity. Do try to set aside a special time each evening to talk with your children, especially if you are out all day.
Your children yell and cry when you leave them with other adults.	Sometimes children want their mommy and daddy to be with them all the time. That's certainly not possible. When you go out, tell your children where you are going and that you will be back — even if they're crying and carrying on. It will teach

Some Final Hints for Working with Your Children (Cont.)

Situation	*Suggestions*
	them that they can trust you. Don't just sneak out the back door!
Your little boy is called a sissie by other children or adults because he cries, or your little girl is teased by adults or children when she plays with cars and trucks.	Don't forget that little boys want just as much love and cuddling as girls. Girls need as many chances for rough play and to be independent as boys do.
Your child is called a name or teased because of his or her color or background.	Unfortunately, there are a lot of angry feelings in today's world between groups of different colors, religions and backgrounds. Help your children to be proud of who they are by telling them stories about their families and their people.
Your children start picking on others because they look and act differently.	Your children will notice that all people don't look or act the same way. Try to help them understand that each child has a contribution to make and should be judged on his or her own merit.
Your children have a hard time or are slow at doing things you ask them to do — so you are tempted to do the things yourself.	It's important for children to develop a sense of responsibility, but it's not always an easy job for you. Start with easy things such as, "Put these socks in the drawer, please."

Some Final Hints for Working with Your Children (Cont.)

Situation	*Suggestions*
	If you are pleasant and polite when you ask children to do things, they will be more apt to please you.
	Children who develop a sense of responsibility at an early age are more able to do things for themselves as they get a little older. This includes school work.
You sense that your children feel: sad unhappy angry hateful upset	Help them to use words to talk about it. For example, you can say, "I think you're angry. Do you want to tell me why?" This is one way to teach your children that there is another way besides hitting and punching to express bad feelings.
You sense that your children feel: happy proud smart pretty	Help them use words to tell you why. Children love to spread their happiness. It will probably make you feel happy, too. Don't forget that if you express your love and happy feelings to your children, as well as your angry ones, they'll feel loved and secure.
You are a one-parent family and your children miss their mother or father.	It is important for your children to have companionship of adults of both sexes. Perhaps you could share some babysitting or errands

Some Final Hints for Working with Your Children (Cont.)

Situation	*Suggestions*
	with a friend. If you are the children's mother, it's nice if you know a male adult who can spend some time with your children: grandfather, cousin, friend of the family. If you are the children's father, perhaps your sister or a female friend could spend some time with them.
Your days are very hectic and you usually feel that you don't have enough time to get everything done.	Try as hard as you can to stick to a daily routine with your children. Consistency makes children feel more secure. They won't spend time worrying about what's going to happen next. This is very important.
You are exhausted and grouchy and feel badly about the way you have treated your children.	It's natural to feel guilty about angry feelings and badly about the things you can't provide for your children. Try to remember that people can't always do all the things they want to do but they can keep trying to do the best for their children.

1

Social Development

Three-Year-Olds	Four-Year-Olds	Five-Year-Olds
Are starting to be more aware of and interested in other people.	Very sociable and interested in other people.	Interested in who people are and what they do.
May begin to form friendships but these change very quickly.	Play best with just one other child but can play in groups of three or four.	Play nicely in small groups of children. They like the companionship of other children.
Sharing and taking turns is very difficult. Each child needs his or her own toy to play with.	Sharing and taking turns is still hard.	Still need adult help in learning to share and take turns, but it's easier if they've gotten their share in the past.
Dependent on adults for approval.	Still dependent on adults for approval.	Like frequent approval from adults.

2
Emotional Development

Three-Year-Olds	Four-Year-Olds	Five-Year-Olds
Very dependent on adults for feelings of accomplishment.	Dependent on adults for feelings of success or failure.	Still feel success or failure by what adults seem to expect of them.
Respond to praise, encouragement and consistent direction.	Respond to praise, encouragement and consistent direction.	Still respond to praise, encouragement and consistent direction.
Like a definite routine.	Feel more secure with a definite routine.	Still find security in a definite routine, but are beginning to be able to be more flexible.
Have a strong emotional link to home.	Have a strong emotional link to home.	Have a strong emotional link to home.
Not usually able to distinguish right from wrong.	Not usually able to distinguish right from wrong.	Are not always able to distinguish right from wrong, by adult standards.
Afraid of the new and unusual.	New and unusual things may frighten them.	May try new and unusual things after slowly getting used to them in a secure atmosphere.
Difficult to reason with, until their ability to use words improves.	Increased verbal ability makes it easier to reason with them.	Usually can be reasoned with and can accept fair punishment without resentment.
Thrive on trust, fairness and standards they can achieve.	Thrive on trust, fairness and standards they can achieve.	Continue to thrive on trust, fairness and standards they can achieve.

3

Intellectual Development

Three-Year-Olds	Four-Year-Olds	Five-Year-Olds
Average attention span for activities *they select* is seven to ten minutes. Like familiar stories repeated over and over again. Like simple stories about animals and children. Very hard for them to sit and do an activity that an adult has selected for more than a few minutes.	Average attention span for activities *they select* is 10 to14 minutes. As attention span grows, stories can be slightly longer with more detail. They like "pretend" stories, alphabet books and books about things that grow. Still find adult-directed sitting activities difficult for more than five to ten minutes.	Average attention span for activities *they select* is 14 to 20 minutes. Like all kinds of good stories about nature, about things they know and books that give information. Attention span is getting longer but is still short for activities directed by adults.
Their vocabulary is increasing and they love new words. Can *start* to be reasoned with, sometimes.	Great talkers. They invent new words. Tell tales full of exaggerations. Often talk as they play.	Still love to talk. Their language is becoming better and richer. Like "jokes" and can tell stories in sequence.
Talk to themselves when they play.	Ask about everything and anything. Lots of "how's" and "why's."	Still curious and like books that give simple explanations.
More interested in the doing than the end result.	More interested in the doing than the end result.	Beginning to be interested in the product, though the doing is still more important.
Paintings do not usually "look" like anything.	Beginnings of designs may appear, though roughly.	Paintings may begin to "look like something" but they put in only those parts that are important to them.
Can build with blocks rather than just move them around.	Building starts to become more involved.	Start to build complex block structures.

4
Motor Development

Three-Year-Olds	Four-Year-Olds	Five-Year-Olds
Gaining more confidence in using their bodies.	Very active – always on the go.	Love physical activity – running, jumping, tumbling, lifting, carrying, digging, pulling, pushing, etc.
Beginning to run, jump and climb with coordination.	Can run, walk, jump, climb and ride tricycles well. They start to do more complicated things with their bodies.	Good motor ability but usually small muscles (writing, cutting, pasting, coloring, stringing, etc.) less developed than large ones. May do well in one motor skill and not in another.
Prefer large motor activities but begin to use finer muscle skills for short periods to do puzzles, crayoning and putting things inside other things, etc.	Same as three-year-olds. Also begin to use scissors.	Small motor control steadily improving.
Usually very susceptible to common childhood illnesses and colds.	Still very susceptible to illnesses and colds.	Still very susceptible to illnesses and colds but starting to build up their immunities this year. If this is child's first year in school, might be out sick often.

VI

Your Children Go to School

1

Choosing a School

If you have two or more schools, day-care centers, or Head Start centers to choose from, a visit can help you make the choice. Here are some important questions to have in mind when you visit a school or center.

1. Are the teachers qualified and is the center certified to work with pre-school children?

2. Is the center safe and clean?

3. Are the adults pleasant to the children, to each other and to you?

4. Are there a variety of activities and materials for the children to use, such as:

   paints
   sand
   puzzles
   outside play space and equipment
   a quiet area for looking at books
   blocks
   books

5. Are visits and participation by parents encouraged?

6. Do the children seem to be having a good time?

Trust you own judgment. If you like the school, your children probably will, too.

2 Getting Ready for School

Going to school, or a Head Start or a day-care center is an important event for you and your children. It may be frightening for your children, since it will be a new experience. Many people (especially children) are uncertain about things they have never done before. You can help by telling your children some of the things you know about school.

"Tomorrow I'm going to take you to visit your new school."

"There will be other children at school for you to play with."

"At school you can play with toys, paint and hear stories and music."

"I think you will like school."

See whether your children can visit the school, center or classroom they will be going to. Then they will know what it looks like and have a chance to meet their teacher. If you can't visit, you can walk with your children to the school. Use the same streets that they will use to walk to school. If you pass the school on any of your neighborhood walks, point it out, so your children will know what and where it is.

If the school is not within walking distance of your home, try to make arrangements with other parents to share transportation of children to and from school. *BE SURE THAT A RESPONSIBLE PERSON TAKES YOUR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL AND BRINGS THEM HOME EACH DAY.*

If you think school is a good and important place, your children will, too.

3

Some Information You Should Provide to the School

When your children start school, you should be ready to give the school certain types of information. In most schools you will be asked to have the following items:

Birth certificate, baptismal certificate or other proof of birthdate.

Health records including dates when your children were immunized.

Financial information about family income.

Additional information which will be useful to your children's teacher is:

Phone number where you can be reached during the day.

Phone number of relative or neighbor who could locate you in case of an emergency.

Name and address of person who will pick up children after school.

Some general information about your children such as:

– what they like to do at home

– what they dislike

– what they're afraid of

– any allergies

– who lives with the children

– previous school experience

Once your children are attending school, keep in touch with the teacher in case of any changes in address, phone number or problems and concerns about your children.

4

Some Information the School Should Give You

You will need to find out certain things about the school your children will attend. Here are some questions you might ask.

"What times does school end?"

"What time will my children come home?"

"What days are holidays from school?"

"What is the school's phone number?"

"How will I know if school is closed because of weather or other emergency?"

"In what ways can parents be involved in the school?"

"Can parents borrow books and other materials to use with their children at home?"

"Are snacks or lunch provided?"

"Are there any costs for snacks, trips, etc?"

"Which, if any, health services will be available through the school? Are there any costs involved?"

"Does the school provide check-ups and treatment for:

eyes
ears
immunizations
teeth
general condition
psychological problems including testing and counseling?"

"How does the school report on the progress of your children?"

The Recruitment Leadership and Training Institute

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